THE SONG of the GUNS

HERBERT KAUFMAN

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THE SONG OF THE GUNS

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THE SONG OF THE GUNS

BY HERBERT KAUFMAN

AUTHOR OF "THE WAITING WOMAN"

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1 ADELPHI TERRACE W.C.

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7

THE HOUR OF VALOUR

IF there be truth behind the splendid boast
That freedom makes of every man a host
And multiplies his courage and his might
Above the strength of peoples without right
To liberty ; now is the hour to show
The universe how Britain meets the foe.

8

A LITTLE BUNCH OF ISLANDS IN THE SEA

WE aren't much to look at if you judge us by the map ;
Just a little bunch of islands in the sea.
We're a peaceful sort of people, and we quite dislike to scrap ;
We're so very fond of our tranquillity.
But if you're aching for a row, and simply asking for it,
Despite our wish for calm and peace we really can't ignore it.
And though we hate to fight, there are times when war is right,
And we have to teach our enemies respect for British might.
Teach them not to interfere
With our comfort and our cheer ;
And once we do start on the job we make the point quite clear,
Oh, dear !
But it does seem very queer
How often we must take the pains to make an old point clear.

We do look unimportant when you measure us by size ;
Such a little bunch of islands in the sea.
But don't go by appearances—we usually surprise
The foe who drops in unexpectedly.
And though we haven't fortified our coasts, we're fixed for trouble
With floating walls, prepared to take a blow and give back double.
By our squadrons we maintain
Power over land and main,
And the lesson which Trafalgar taught we'll teach the world again.
Let no foeman interfere with our comfort and our cheer
For once we do meet with his fleet we'll make this point quite clear.
Oh, dear !
But it does seem very queer
How often Britain's Navy has to make a plain fact clear.

Besides, there are the Colonies, please count them, Kaiser, dear.
Quite a little bunch of islands in the sea.

Not to mention several Continents that do not
stand in fear
Of the handful you can send from Germany.
'Tis true we have our family spats, but when we
face bad weather,
Wherever Britain's Standard floats her people stand
together,
And our little rows are done
At the signal of the gun.
When the King sends forth his call to arms the
Empire is one.
And we have no need to fear for our safety, get
that clear,
While four hundred million answer to the sum-
mons with a cheer.
Oh, dear !
But it really does appear
That some very bad advisers have been standing at
your ear.

MOTHER BRITAIN AND HER SONS

WE are coming, Mother, coming—we are coming home to fight,
To defend the Empire's honour, to uphold the Empire's might.
From the plains of Manitoba, from the diggings of the Rand,
We are coming, Mother Britain, coming home to lend a hand.
From the islands and the highlands fast across the seven seas ;
Look where'er the sun is shining, and your flag is in the breeze.
We'll prove our breed in your hour of need, and teach the bally Huns,
Who strike at Britain, they must likewise reckon with her sons.

We are coming, Mother, coming—save a good place at the front ;
Where the battle wages fiercest, let your children bear the brunt.

'Tis a long way from Australia, and we've earned
the right to stand
In the first ranks, Mother Britain, have your
orders when we land.
From the islands and the highlands, from the
outposts of the earth,
On a hundred ships we hasten to your side to
prove our worth.
We've come to stick through thin or thick, and
woe betide the ones
Who dare to smite the Mother-might, forgetting
of the Sons.

We are coming, Mother Britain, we are coming
to your aid.
There's a debt we owe our fathers, and we mean
to see it paid.
From the jungles of Rhodesia, from the snows of
Saskatoon,
We are coming, Mother Britain, and we hope to
see you soon.
From the islands and the highlands, just as fast as
we can speed,
We are hastening to serve you in the hour of your
need.

For, wherever peril calls abroad for loyal hearts
and guns,
We'll show the foe, that weal or woe, we're
Mother Britain's sons.

14

THE CRY OF INDIA

NAZARADDIN, metai-wallah,
Heard the news in the bazaar,
Brought the tidings to Mutmammet,
And Mutmammet spread it far :
From the gaunt sands of Trivandrum
To the snows of Chekassar,
It flies through Ind
On wings of wind,
"The Call ! The Call to War !"

"Oh, we shall go to war, brother,
And we shall sail afar,
To do or die for King, brother,
Rung ho ! Let good steel ring, brother !
Oh, what a splendid thing, brother !
When Rajput, Sikh, and Gurkha stand
With Pathan for the Motherland
And side by side Bengali ride
With sahib cavalry, in pride."

Diwan, Ahkoon, Gaekwar and Khan,
Brahmin and Parsi, Mussulman,

Bhanvangar princeling and Afridi thief,
Peshawar noble and Linghi Thang chief
Offer their service, their rupees, their men :
India waits but to learn " where and when."

" Rung ho ! Rung ho ! from hill to sea
Our temples pray for victory.
The hate of sect for sect is still,
Alike Islam's and Buddha's will—
To-morrow for the blood-feud—we
Are One to-day in loyalty.

Rung ho ! Rung ho ! Chitral and Oudh
Unsheathe your claws and rouse your brood !
Kashmir, Baluchistan, Bengal—
The Call to Arms—The Call ! The Call ! "

16

WE DRAW THE SWORD

THERE was no other way, O Lord,
Except the sword.
The fight we fight is not our will,
Yet we must die and we must kill
Unquailed, since Duty is the cause.
A pledge was riven. There are laws
Of nations, so inviolate
They transcend selfishness of state.
Peace were a right too dearly bought,
If justice must be set at nought.
How dared we pause to count the cost
When cowardice meant honour lost?
Else overnight had changed the flag
Of Britain to a sullied rag.
Our hearts and steel are clean of hate;
Our purposes, O God, are great
In sacrifice. We but deny
The despot. Where the flames leap high
Of liberty, we guard the lights
That beacon mankind to the heights.
There are the promises we gave,
That none might conquer to enslave

17

Democracy. We hold supreme
Our duty to the ancient dream
Of Progress. And we draw the sword
For Mankind, King, and Thee, O Lord !

18

THE HELL-GATE OF SOISSONS

MY name is Darino, the poet. You have heard? *Oui, Comédie Française.*
Perchance it has happened, *mon ami*, you know of my unworthy lays.
Ah, then, you must guess how my fingers are itching to talk to a pen;
For I was at Soissons, and saw it, the death of the twelve Englishmen.

My leg, *malheureusement*, I left it, behind on the banks of the Aisne.
Regret? I would pay with the other to witness their valour again.
A trifle, indeed, I assure you, to give for the honour to tell
How that handful of British, undaunted, went into the Gateway of Hell.

Let me draw you a plan of the battle. Here we French and your Engineers stood;
Over there a detachment of German sharpshooters lay hid in a wood.

A mitrailleuse battery planted on top of this
well-chosen ridge
Held the road for the Prussians and covered the
direct approach to the bridge.

It was madness to dare the dense murder that
spewed from those ghastly machines.
(Only those who have danced to its music can
know what the mitrailleuse means.)
But the bridge on the Aisne was a menace ; our
safety demanded its fall :
" Engineers,—volunteers ! " In a body, The Royals
stood out at the call.

Death at best was the fate of that mission—to
their glory not one was dismayed.
A party was chosen—and seven survived till the
powder was laid.
And *they* died with their fuses unlighted. Another
detachment ! Again
A sortie is made—all too vainly. The bridge still
commanded the Aisne.

We were fighting two foes—Time and Prussia—
the moments were worth more than troops.
We *must* blow up the bridge. A lone soldier
darts out from the Royals and swoops
For the fuse! Fate seems with us. We cheer
him; he answers—our hopes are re-born!
A ball rips his visor—his khaki shows red where
another has torn.

Will he live—will he last—will he make it?
Helas! And so near to the goal!
A second, he dies! Then a third one! A fourth!
Still the Germans take toll!
A fifth, *magnifique!* It is magic! How does he
escape them? He may. . . .
Yes, he *does!* See, the match flares! A rifle
rings out from the wood and says "Nay!"

Six, seven, eight, nine take their places, six, seven,
eight, nine brave their hail;
Six, seven, eight, nine—how we count them!
But the sixth, seventh, eight, and ninth fail!

A tenth ! *Sacre nom !* But these English are
soldiers—they know how to try ;
(He fumbles the place where his jaw was)—they
show, too, how heroes can die.

Ten we count—ten who ventured unquailing—
ten there were—and the ten are no more !
Yet another salutes and superbly essays where the
ten failed before.
God of Battles, look down and protect him ! Lord,
his heart is as Thine—let him live !
But the mitrailleuse sputters and stutters, and
riddles him into a sieve.

Then I thought of my sins, and sat waiting the
charge that we could not withstand.
And I thought of my beautiful Paris, and gave
a last look at the land,
At France, *ma belle France*, in her glory of blue
sky and green field and wood.
Death with honour, but never surrender. And
to die with such men—it was good.

They are forming—the bugles are blaring—they
will cross in a moment and then. . . .
When out of the line of the Royals (your island,
mon ami, breeds *men*)
Burst a private, a tawny-haired giant—it was
hopeless, but, *ciel !* how he ran !
Bon Dieu please remember the pattern, and make
many more on his plan !

No cheer from our ranks, and the Germans, they
halted in wonderment too ;
See, he reaches the bridge ; ah ! he lights it !
I am dreaming, it *cannot* be true.
Screams of rage ! Fusillade ! They have killed him !
Too late though, the good work is done.
By the valour of twelve English martyrs, the Hell-
Gate of Soissons is won !

23

THE PINCHBECK IMMORTAL

KNAVE, did you think to climb a-high
And write your name in that same sky
Whose stars triumphantly proclaim
A Caesar's and a Wilhelm's fame,
Along dishonour's slimy road ?
'Twas not the pathway that they strode.
Pinchbeck Immortal, while the earth
Survives, men will recall the dearth
You wrought, and ages will acclaim
Wilhelm the Mongol, when men name
The enemies of human weal.
No future service can repeal
The ghastly record of your shame.
Eternity embalms your blame.
When Shishik's memory is done
And Israel forgives Sargon,
When Nero's hellish record fades,
When Alaric's atrocious raids,
When Hengist and his swarm of Jutes,
When swart Totila's raping brutes,
Are swallowed up in mystery
You will defile world history.

24

A SCRAP OF PAPER

"Just for a word—'neutrality' . . . just for a scrap of paper Great Britain was going to make war. . . ."—*The German Chancellor to the British Ambassador in Berlin.*

JUST for a "scrap of paper,"
Just for a Nation's word,
Just for a clean tradition,
Just for a treaty slurred;
Just for a pledge defaulted,
Just for a dastard blow,
Just for an ally's summons,
Just for a friend struck low;
Just for the weal of progress,
Just for a trust held dear,
Just for the rights of mankind,
Just for a duty clear;
Just for a Prussian insult,
Just for a splendid cause,
Just for the hope of progress,
Just for the might of laws;
Just for the kingdom's peril,
Just for a deed of shame,
Just for defence of honour,
Just for the British name!

HOW LIÈGE HELD THE ROAD

WE were pounding at the anvils when they pounded at our gates ;
"Open!" cried the German squadrons ; "let us pass, or meet your fate !
We are millions ; dare deny us and Liège is but a name."
But we chose to die in honour than to buy our lives in shame.
So we banked our eager fires, and we laid aside the sledge,
Recking only that our sires had endowed us with the pledge
To maintain an ally's honour, to uphold the Belgian code,
And we answered with our cannon, *that Liège would hold the road !*

We, who faced the Roman legions when the Prussian was unborn,
Met the insult of the raider with a message of steel scorn.

Dared he think, this upstart Caesar, that the Belgii
would be cowed,
Where the Roman Caesar found us standing fearlessly and proud?
And we did not wait for England, and we did not
wait for France,
But alone we gave him battle, and alone blocked
his advance;
And the flag that fluttered boldly over town and
fortress showed
To the world that God fought with us, and *Liège still held the road!*

Fifty times the hungry Uhlan ate our lead and
asked for more;
Fifty times the Belgian dragoons charged and cut
them to the core;
And they perished by the thousand, but an ever-swelling flood
Day by day poured through the border, sworn to
drench Liège in blood.
And our wives looked at their children, but our
women did not quail:
"Serve the fatherland. 'Twere better that we
perish than you fail.

Rather than to breed to cowards, we will bear the widow's load ;
For the glory of our children, fight ! *Liège must hold the road !*"

When the last sword is a plough-share, and the last war-trampled plain
Has been furrowed, and its scars are hid beneath a rug of grain ;
When the nations' hates are sated, and the ancient feuds have died ;
When the Mongol lust is vanished, and the last gun laid aside ;
When the last despot's ambition is a memory or the grave ;
When we know not tsar, nor emperor, nor king, nor serf, nor slave ;
Men will tell the deathless story of the Belgians' splendid code,
When for God, and king, and glory, *at Liège we held the road.*

28

HIGGINS

COMICAL duffer, my pal, Charlie Higgins,
He and me shared for three years the same diggin's.
Always a-hunting around for a lark,
Time and again I would hear him remark :
" This 'ere old world takes you just as you take it,
Life, after all, is the thing that you make it ;
Give it a chuck in the chin and it giggles,
Tickle its ribs, and my word ! how it wriggles.
Keep up your pecker when matters look bad,
That is my motto, young fellow, m'lad."

Bein' around him was good as a tonic,
Must have been born with a laugh on—just chronic.
Humour ! The hardest of luck couldn't kill it,
Quid in his pocket or out of a billet,
You couldn't tell. He was never down-hearted,
Even when him and his last farthing parted.
" If skies are cloudy don't waste time compl'ining,
Go and dig silver, it's there in the lining.
Keep up your pecker when matters look bad,
That is my motto, young fellow, m'lad."

When the war broke—" Now this is a surpriser."
Charlie he said " if you arsk me, that Kaiser
Seems to be looking for trouble most plainly ;
Pity indeed, if he asks for it vainly."
Up went his chin, and he swelled out his chest,
Straightened his necktie and pulled down his vest,
" If they need some one to fight for the flag,
I'll take the job," remarked Higgins—the wag !
" Keep up your pecker when matters look bad,
That is my motto, young fellow, m'lad."

Went and enlisted, he did, brought me too.
Had his luck with him, as usual—got through.
Him ! Why he hardly stood five feet and four,
Measured at that in the high heels he wore.
Said to the Sergeant : " I'm taller, I think,
Keeping my shoes on," and gave him the wink.
" I'm the right sort, I'll be harder to hit
Than some of the bigger ones." Lord, what a wit !
" Keep up your pecker when matters look bad,
That is my motto, young fellow, m'lad."

I'm free to acknowledge that I had my fright
The first time the regiment went up to fight.

The worst of the shells is their 'orrible whine,
It makes the cold shivers play Hell with your spine.
I wanted to bolt it, when Higgins, he laughed :—
"That last one just missed me, I quite got the draught.
Move up there, you fellows ahead, I've a date
With a German or two, and I mustn't be late.
Keep up your pecker when matters look bad,
Make that your motto, young fellow, m'lad."

I don't recollect all that followed. I know
That they came on by thousands and gave us What Ho!
My God! but the shrapnel does mess a man up;
A chunk of it caught me; I bled by the cup.
And while I was lying out there all alone,
A-wondering if I had one solid bone,
I heard somebody grumble: "A fine load you'll be,"
And Higgins bent over and took hold of me.
"Keep up your pecker, you're not hurt so bad
As some of them corpses, young fellow, m'lad."

He lifted me, full fifteen stone, did the runt,
And brought me to safety, then dropped with a grunt.
A Mauser ball drilled a neat hole in his spine.
"Yours truly," said Higgins, "I hereby resign.
Present to the Kaiser, when you reach Berlin,
My 'umble regrets that I couldn't drop in;
And when you have leisure," he lifted his head,
"Write Kitchener," he grinned, "and inform him I said:—
'Keep up your pecker, young fellow, m'lad.'"
And he winked and he died—still the joker, by Gad!

32

FORTY MEN FROM SIMPSON'S

FORTY men from Simpson's !
" Will you 'ave it rare ?
Try a bit of pudding, sir ;
Yes, the cheddar's fair."

Forty men from Simpson's !
Quitting in a group,
Marching off in khaki for
To fix the Kaiser's soup.

Forty men from Simpson's !
" Will you take it 'ot ?
'Ere's your Hell served in the shell,
Piping from the pot ! "

Forty men from Simpson's !
Hurry, turn 'em loose,
They're the sort we need in front
To cook the German goose.

Forty men from Simpson's !
What a thing to read :
Forty humble serving men
Serving Britain's need !

33

Forty men from Simpson's !
  Don't you blush with shame,
While they play the soldier's part
  And you, the *waiting* game ?

34

ATKINS WISHES TO EXPLINE

LORD, but I 'ave seen a lot
Since we quitted Aldershot
For our little 'oliday in France.
On the morning that we starts,
Ordered off to foreign parts,
I remarks to me, "T. A., this is your chance.
I have often 'eard you say,
And you know it's true, T. A.,
That if ever you could get to gay Paree,
Where the Madamoselle larks
In the boulevards and parks,
Quite a fling you'd 'ave—you said the same to me.
Well, you've got your blooming way,
And on regimental pay.
Are you 'appy? Not you—all at once you're keen
For a trip across the Rhine.
You do nothing now but pine
For to go and pay a visit to Berlin.

Now, the Frenchman, let me say,
Though a bit queer, is O.K.

When you get acquainted with him, he's not bad.
Though his uniform's a botch
(Still, we have the Highland Scotch),
And his notion of a company drill is sad—
While the grub he eats, my word !
Snails and frogs' legs, is absurd,
But he isn't used to better, I suppose.
I've no wish to make complaint
That he can't be what he ain't ;
He's a-doing of the very best he knows.
But I'm curious to see
What it's like in Germany.
Sudden notion on my part—I strongly lean
To a trip across the Rhine,
And I'm sure it would be fine
If we'd drop in on the Kaiser, at Berlin.

My ! but human nature's strange.
How one's prejudices change !
Year ago, I swear, I wouldn't lift my 'and
If a friend had come and laid
My expenses all prepaid
For a journey through the blooming, blighting land.

But I've lately changed my mind,
And I will not be resigned
'Till we call and sorter take a look around.
Certain work I 'ave in view
In a neighbourhood or two
Strongly urges me to get upon the ground.
Unkind statements in the last
Week or two, T. A., have passed,
Bearin' on the English Army, and I'm keen
For a trip across the Rhine
For the purpose to expline
Where they've made their little errors in Berlin.

37

DE MORTE

I

SINCE I must die, then let me die, to live
Remembered for the utmost I could give
When England faced the hour of her need.
My work is done—man's duty is to breed
From wholesome loins, and, passing, leave behind
A fitter generation in his kind.
To-morrow is the all-important goal !
Because undaunted sires paid proud toll
Betimes, the nation's honour stood at stake,
And yielded all, unquailing, for my sake.
I, too, in turn—now that the call has come—
Must answer to the droning of the drum.

I am but one ; yet oft has one before
Swerved victory and turned the tide of war.
One soldier, if his heart be bold, can dare
So nobly as to shame a host's despair.
One sacrifice, when dread has swept before,
Can thrill a kingdom to its farthest shore.

38

I am but one ; yet it may be that Fate
Has willed that I shall perish to make great
The name of England. Battlefields are strange
With unexpectedness, and hist'ries change
Because the proper hour finds the man.
I cannot sense the vastness of the plan
Beyond horizon. But I shall be there
To do my humble or my splendid share.

II

The span of human life, at best, is short—
Why count the paltry years: their most is nought.
When measured 'gainst Eternity's amount
A year, or ten, or fourscore do not count.
A myriad have been. In love and hate,
Have played their parts for power and estate ;
Have jingled coin, exalted puny pride.
Tell me, who were they, and where did they bide ?
I do not even know the Kings who died
In Yesterday, except some vagrant pen
By chance has willed their dim careers to men.

III

If but the seed I leave behind me root and thrive
What matter if the tree does not survive.
I have known pain—yet there were vast delights.
If dark moods rode across the sullen nights,
The dawns were more resplendent for the gloom.
Man born of woman's travail knows his doom :
Knows that he goes to join the mighty host
That journeys ever to the Stygian coast.
Despot and martyr, and master and slave,
Brothers and equals, we enter the grave :
Down in the tomb of all, back to the womb of all,
Thrust in the dust of our making, and then
Out of the lot of us, out of the rot of us,
Out of the crumblings of things that were men—
Draining the sweet rains and suns of Spring skies,
Flowers shall blossom and green corn shall rise.

"DIE KULTUR"

CONCEITED fools—to hear you talk,
All nations but the German walk
In ignorance. You rant and prate
As if the only high estate
Of knowledge is your own. Men thought
Superbly when the Teuton fought
Skin-clad and helmed in hide and horn,
When Hohenzollern was unborn.

There is slight debt we owe to you.
Before your coming Europe knew
The splendid arts and crafts—was sage
Beyond your narrow, jealous gauge.
The Gods make mad—remember Troy—
First, those whom they mark to destroy.
If yours were wisdom, you could read
The words the stars wrote at the deed
Of Louvain. Every nation fell
A-down that loved not Justice well.
Dareios had his learned Court,
In Cheops' Egypt scholars wrought,

The Saracen delved deep in lore
Of sorts men never knew before.
Rome bred vast genius in her womb ;
She served ignobly—was a tomb.

We pay full meed to Heine's pen,
And Goethe's thoughts have bettered men.
To Haeckel, Humboldt, Koch, and Kant
Due and unstinted praise we grant.
Beethoven, Wagner, Mendelssohn,
Sachs, Dürer, Mommsen, are your own.
But pause a moment to extol
Some other names on glory's roll :
Vandyck, Rembrandt, Galvo, Corot,
Da Vinci, Michaelangelo,
Verdi, Voltaire, Dvorák, Bizet,
The Bard of Avon—if we may—
Newton, Watts, Romney, Kelvin, Scott,
Harvey—we humbly beg to lot
With the elect and chosen ones
That Germany proclaims her sons.

You seek excuse in " Die Kultur "
For every stratagem and lure,

Outlaw device and deed of shame
With which you play the soldier's game :
For Hunnish code and Mongol lust ;
For violated pledge and trust :
For women raped and children slain ;
For Malines, Termonde, Rheims, Louvain.
You, who exalt Art over all,
Behold, superb Cathedrals fall.
Applaud the cannon's devil work ;
And when the Earth protests, you shirk
The issue, disregard the foul
Achievements of your race, and howl
For sympathy in neutral lands.
You, with the blood red on your hands,
You, who would strangle Freedom's might,
And set the sword above the right,
By every act and thought abjure
The very spirit of " Kultur."

THE "DREADNOUGHT"

IT hardly seems that there can be
A thing upon the earth or sea
To stand an instant in your path,
And dare provoke your Titan wrath.
How ancient folk would glory to
Have made a deity of you !
And pray what god since God began
Was mighty on so vast a plan !

The puny bolts of Jove would rain
Against your mailèd groin in vain ;
And Æolus, perchance, might boast
Of strength to buffet you a-coast ;
But Earth would perish in the blow
So awful it could lay you low.

It is the chieftain's splendid right
To fall in battle, ere Time smite
The youth and grandeur of his might.
Far better, Dreadnought, England toll
The triumph of your passing soul,

Than come the day, as else it must,
When cast aside, and caked with rust,
Degraded, and forgot, you creep,
Heartbroken, to the junkman's heap.

In all your majesty and pride,
Turn out to sea, and ride, and ride !
Go ! Find the water curs that bay
Against the British sea-dog's sway ;
Search out the foeman, and report
Our answer to his fleet and fort.
From Baltic shore to Channel hill
Your guns shall speak the nation's will.

In all your majesty and pride,
Turn out to sea—and ride, and ride !

45

THEY DID NOT KNOW

WE have fulfilled our trust, Old Queen;
Our proud traditions yet are clean.
Sleep on in peace—all is serene.

They did not know, they could not tell,
Who loved their honour half so well,
That we had only wares to sell.

Shopkeepers, aye. Who seeks our shelves
May buy of single things and twelves,
But never find thereon ourselves.

Shopkeeping is a goodly trade
So long as honest scales are weighed
And measurement is fairly made.

Oh, how they erred, who paused before
The factor's shop, the merchant's door,
And deemed us unprepared for war.

They would not learn, and could not read,
But judged that England's soul was greed,
That Britain had a huckster's creed,

Would play the game with loaded dice,
And void her treaties, if the price
Of ignominy but suffice.

They saw the clerk bend to the pen,
The mercer with the yardstick, when
They came to measure Englishmen.

" What shall we fear, who are so skilled
In craft, adept in arms, and drilled ?
How shall their empty ranks be filled ?

How can these blind and foolish ones,
Whose hands have not yet served the guns,
Oppose when we send forth our sons ? "

Empress, they did not dream that Right
Be-breeds a giant overnight,
And Justice breaks a giant's might.

We have fulfilled our trust, Old Queen ;
Our proud traditions yet are clean.
Sleep on in peace—all is serene.

47

MASKS OFF!

SO long as the hot loins of danger,
So long as the stark womb of war,
Shall re-birth the waif of the ranger,
And re-breed the son of the whore;
So long as the challenge of peril,
Rings sweet in the ear of the hind,
Who trembles lest Britain be sterile
Of courage and manhood, is blind.

The tribe ever bows to the boldest,
And serves him who serves best the sword.
And we, as when history was oldest,
In battle shall seek the true lord;
To peasants unquailing, the ermine—
For nobles ignoble, disdain—
The hour is come to determine
Where lurks Britain's splendid old strain.

The craven betrays craven sires,
The blood of the coward will out;
The summons to arms wakes proud fires,
Bedimmed in the veins of the lout.

Peace peddles her honour to bag-men ;
But titles cannot change the plan
On which God made lenders and ragmen ;
War reads not the crest, but the man.

Ancestry alone is a measure
For lickspittle, snob, cad and fool ;
God pity the weaklings who treasure
The inches of so short a rule !
What you're born doesn't count for a tittle ;
Distinction by birth is a lie.
And we know not the great from the little
Until we behold how they die.

49

THE SONG OF THE GUNS

HEAR the guns, hear the guns !
High above the splutter-sputter
Of the Maxim, and the stutter
Of the rifles, hear them shrieking.
See the searching shells come sneaking,
Softly speaking,
Slyly seeking,
Thirsting, bursting, shrapnel-leaking
Where the ranks are thickest—tearing
Mighty gaps among the daring.
Charging horse and rider stumble,
And brigades fall in a jumble ;
Earthworks crumble,
Standards tumble,
And the driving bayonets fumble,
But unsated,
Still the hated
Cannon thunder, unabated.
Hear them rumble,
Hear them grumble,
Hear the old song of the guns !
" Send your sons,
Send your sons,

All your near ones,
All your dear ones ;
Give us food !
Give us food !
Give the strongest of your brood.
Let us feed !
Let us feed !
On the bravest that you breed.
Give us meat,
Give us meat.
Oh, the blood of Valour's sweet ! "

And the women make reply :
Ah, the glory of the lie—
" Look, no tear is in our eye.
Rather would we see you die,
For your country, than stand by.
Rather would we boast to tell
To your children that you fell,
Than to have you lurk and sell
Honour for a coward's breath ;
Better far the soldier's death.
Go and battle for the land.
Make a stand !
Make a stand !

Go and join the dauntless band.
Take a hand !
Take a hand !
Count not us—God will provide ! "

Thus the women in their pride
Mask their hearts—their anguish hide.
Thus the mother and the bride
Bid their men to march and ride
To the guns,
Hungry guns,
Rumbling, grumbling for their sons
Thus the women ever give,
Give their nearest, dearest ones
At the summons of the guns.

What is war to men—they *die.*
But the widowed women, aye,
To the end alone, must *live.*

52

DIGNITY

WHAT is this talk of dignity?
Who are the ones that prate
Of asinine distinctions
With a foeman at the gate?
Play if you will the game of snob
When there's nought else to play,
But 'less your voice be raised to help
The Cause, withhold your bray.

We have no place for little men,
No ear for little thoughts
Amid the thunder of the fleets
Before the German forts.
Silence! across the Channel vasts
The pealing cannon sound,
Proclaiming that the British still
Undaunted hold their ground.

Weigh not the praise, judge not the form
We choose to stir men's souls.
Whate'er the method, it is best
That quickest fills the rolls.

'Tis not to guard the empty form
Of precedent we war :
The nation's voice is raised to rouse
A guard for Britain's shore.

Split hairs *ad lib.* when theory
Has equal weight with fact.
To-day who serves his country's need
Can serve alone by act.
'Tis not the time to draw fine points
Too long be-hemmed-and-hawed
By narrow schools and pedant fools—
The world has drawn the sword !

"THE THIN RED LINE" IS OVER

WE used to wear the scarlet, and the scarlet was our pride,
But the tunic of the Grenadier they made us lay aside.
We took it off in sorrow, and we gave it up in pain,
And no enemy will ever see us fight in it again.
For we do our work in khaki, as the scarlet's hard to hide.
The coat in which we sailed afore so oft from Hull and Dover
Will never see the battle more—"The thin red line" is over.

The glory of the Grenadiers has never worn a scar,
Upon a hundred battlefields we've brightened Britain's star.
We died at Salamanca, and we fell at Waterloo,
But the last foe has engaged us in the coat our fathers knew.

For we're all alike in khaki, when we march
away to war.
The coat in which we sailed afore so oft from
Hull and Dover
Will never face the cannon's roar—"The thin
red line" is over.

Bahajos still recalls us, and Toulouse cannot forget;
The havoc of our bayonets lives in their memory
yet.
The field of Balaclava is eternal with our fame;
We've changed our coats, but not our hearts; in
khaki we're the same,
As the German has discovered every place that
we have met.
But the coat in which we sailed afore so oft from
Hull and Dover
Was not the tunic that we wore—"The thin red
line" is over.

56

WILHELM THE MONGOL

SOME say that there's a Mongol strain in Prussian blood ;
That when there burst from the fell East that yellow flood
Of flat-faced devils, sprung from hell's own womb,
And Attila left Rome behind, a tomb :
The Hunnish tribesmen, raiding in the West,
Left many a Hunnish babe at German breast.
This is sheer legend—yet, if the tale be true,
How proud to-day were Attila of you !

57

A PRAYER

GOD bless our arms, in this black night.
With saddened hearts we march to fight
For Honour's sake, and Thee, and Right.
We battle not in rage nor hate.
We are the Watchers at the Gate,
The Warders of the Northern Strait.
And while we hold it none shall sate
His heel upon a weaker State.
Whate'er his creed, whate'er his breed,
E'en though blood-brother, he shall bleed
Dishonour, and be purged of wrong.
'Tis not an ally rich or strong
Whose peril sends our drums afore
To summon Britain's sons to war.
The soil of Belgium bears a stain
That blots our 'scutcheon, while we reign
In power over seven seas
And falter if a vandal please
To violate his sacred pact.
Tear-dimmed, but steel in hand, we act;
To do or die, the British host
Sets foot again on Belgium's coast,
To play our part, as once before,
And crush a despot as of yore.

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